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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MENNONITES: PASTOR NGUYEN HONG QUANG AND LE THI HONG LIEN

REF: REF: A) HCMC 142; B) HCMC 106

1. (SBU) On February 22, visiting S/P Staffer William Inboden and ConGenOffs met with Ms. Le Thi Phu Dung (strictly protect), wife of imprisoned Mennonite house church pastor Nguyen Hong Quang. Dung said she has visited her husband in HCMC's Chi Hoa prison "two or three times" and is able to deliver supplies to him regularly. Her most recent visit was in early February. Although not as fit as he was before his arrest, Dung said her husband was in good mental and physical condition. Dung confirmed that HCMC police had offered to reduce Quang's three-year sentence if he dropped his pending appeal, but Quang said he was not guilty and therefore would not withdraw the appeal (Ref A).

2. (SBU) Dung also confirmed that Mr. Le Quang Du (protect), the father of imprisoned Mennonite Ms. Le Thi Hong Lien, who suffered a mental breakdown while in prison, had written a letter to the GVN on her daughter's case. Dung provided a copy of the January 31 letter to post, which was addressed to the Party General Secretary, the Prime Minister, Ministers of Public Security and

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Justice, and the Supreme Court as well as HCMC officials. The letter accuses local prison and police officials of repeatedly torturing Lien, and demands that those responsible for her torture be disciplined. The letter also demands that her sentence be vacated because she was non compos mentis during her trial and that she be released immediately to receive medical treatment.

3. (SBU) Dung said that Lien's father went to visit Lien on the morning of February 22 and was told that she had been transferred from HCMC's Chi Hoa prison to another facility in neighboring Binh Phuoc province on February 17. Other prisoners in Chi Hoa prison reportedly told Lien's father that she continued to show signs of mental illness and was kept in the prison infirmary until her transfer.

4. (SBU) Comment: In our meeting with Lien's father in late January (ref B) he detailed several possible incidents of police abuse, although he stopped short of accusing the police of torturing her. His January 31 letter to the GVN also claims that he had appealed Lien's sentence immediately after her trial in mid-November but that the HCMC court ruled that he was not a party to the case; in our meeting, Lien's father told us that he had not contacted senior prison authorities, the courts or consulted a lawyer to review his daughter's case.

5. (SBU) Comment continued: Following our January meeting with Lien's father, we consulted with a senior defense attorney in HCMC who recommended that Lien's family submit a request to HCMC prison and court authorities to suspend Lien's sentence and transfer her to an appropriate medical facility for care. It remains to be seen whether the family's broader, stronger and higher-level approach will yield positive results. We will continue to monitor Lien's case, advocate with local officials for her release on humanitarian grounds and report any official response to her father's letter. End Comment.

WINNICK